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SUBJECT: NON-PROLIFERATION DISCUSSIONS WITH EGYPT

¶1. (U) Summary: Special Representative for Nuclear Nonproliferation Christopher Ford visited Cairo on March 21 for bilateral consultations on Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) issues. Egypt has expressed its dissatisfaction with what it says is insufficient progress in implementing the Resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review Conference. Ford assured his interlocutors that the United States continues to support that Resolution, call for a weapons-of-mass-destruction (WMD)-free Middle East and expects this issue to be fully discussed at the PrepCom. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On March 21, Special Representative (SR) Ford met with Ambassador Naela Gabr, Assistant Minister for Multilateral Affairs, and other Egyptian officials to discuss procedural and substantive matters related to the NPT, particularly the upcoming PrepCom. Other participating Egyptian officials included Ihab Fouzy, Deputy Assistant Minister for Multilateral Affairs; Dr. Hossam Aly, Director of Disarmament; and Omar A. Youssef, Counsellor, Cabinet of the Minister. Other U.S. participants were DCM Stuart Jones, Pol-Mil Officer Lisa Kenna, and Robert Blum and Scott Davis (ISN/MNSA).

¶3. (SBU) The principal -- and virtually the sole -- interest expressed by Egypt regarding the PrepCom is to obtain greater attention to and action regarding the 1995 NPT Middle East Resolution. Gabr made clear that her instruction from Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit is to ensure that the PrepCom agenda includes an explicit reference to this Resolution. Egypt prefers that the agenda used for the PrepComs held in 2002, 2003, and 2004 be used to attain this objective, and referring to the importance of U.S. leadership on nonproliferation issues, urged SR Ford to support this approach. Gabr noted that the President of the 2005 Review Conference, Sergio Duarte of Brazil, had taken too long to resolve the agenda for that meeting, and suggested that this should be a lesson to us now as we prepare for a new review cycle. She also complained about the note on the new cycle recently sent by the NPT depositaries (United States, Russia, United Kingdom) to all NPT parties, because it omitted a reference to the 1995 resolution, a reference that had been present in a similar depositaries note circulated in 2002 at the start of the last review process.

¶4. (SBU) Ford assured Gabr that the United States seeks a full debate at the PrepCom on all NPT issues, including the Middle East. Several of the Egyptians expressed their satisfaction with this approach. SR Ford said that the depositaries had simply wanted to ensure that the note in no way overstepped the legitimate role the depositaries have had

since the beginning of the strengthened review process in 1995, and that the note had been kept scrupulously to strictly procedural issues and avoided anything that might suggest the depositaries were dictating to States Party about what subjects to discuss. The changes were not intended to minimize the importance of the 1995 Middle East Resolution. Regarding the agenda, Ford said that that the United States prefers a simple and all-encompassing formulation that allows for discussion of all issues but does not specify any particular ones. This, he argued, was the best way to avoid procedural deadlock and move rapidly into the substantive discussions all States Party say they desire.

15. (SBU) Aly pointed out that the 1995 Resolution was part of a "package" that included indefinite extension of the NPT and that little progress had been made to implement the Resolution since that time. Gabr stated that the 1995 Decisions and Resolution are legally binding. When pressed on Egypt's legal view on this matter, Aly said that they regard the Middle East Resolution as being as legally binding as the decision on extension itself. Ford expressed doubt regarding this legal interpretation but said that, regardless of legal interpretations, the United States regards the Resolution as important and its goal of a WMD-free Middle East as deserving of continuing attention.

16. (SBU) In response to continuing Egyptian insistence that the United States support adoption of the 2002-2004 version of the agenda, Ford suggested that the best model from past practice would likely instead be the agenda from the 2005 Review Conference -- which was the last time all States Party had agreed upon an agenda. Gabr and her colleagues argued strenuously against this, contending that the 2005 agenda was entirely unacceptable. (Comment: The 2005 agenda omitted any reference to the 1995 Middle East Resolution. Egypt also obstructed substantive agreement at the 2005 RevCon agenda. End Comment) Ford then said that it would be difficult to imagine Washington making the concessions Egypt wished without getting something in return. Did Egypt, he asked, have in mind agreeing to some U.S. additions to the 2002 formula, such as the need to consider other aspects of other outcomes of past Review Conferences as well? He also pointed out that references to the 2000 Final Document were awkward for the United States because we do not support implementation of all of the "Thirteen Practical Steps" in the 2000 RevCon's Final Document. These steps, for example, call for the strengthening of the ABM Treaty, which no longer exists.

17. (SBU) The Egyptians responded favorably to this idea but said they would need to see proposed language. Gabr assured us that Egypt's view on the agenda did not signal an intention to have the Middle East issue monopolize the PrepCom debate. She also expressed Egyptian dissatisfaction that the likely product of the PrepCom would only be a Chairman's summary rather than something agreed by all States Parties, but indicated that Egypt could accept the former. Gabr said that Egypt's support for efforts to persuade Iran to comply with its NPT and IAEA safeguards obligations was shown by its support for the February 2006 IAEA Board of Governors decision to refer Iran to the UN Security Council. She added that the West has a "double standard" in its pressuring Iran but ignoring Israel's nuclear activities. Ford disagreed about the alleged "double standard," but said that U.S. and Egyptian interests regarding Iran do not differ and should produce more common action.

18. (SBU) The meeting concluded with an understanding that the two sides would try to work out language for the agenda that met each side's concerns. All expressed the hope that any resolution that met both Egyptian and U.S. concerns would be acceptable to Ambassador Yukiya Amano, Chairman-designate of the first PrepCom, and other key Parties. All participants in the meeting also agreed to try to achieve an agreed agenda before Amano circulates his draft to all Parties on or around April 6.

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